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COMIC READER

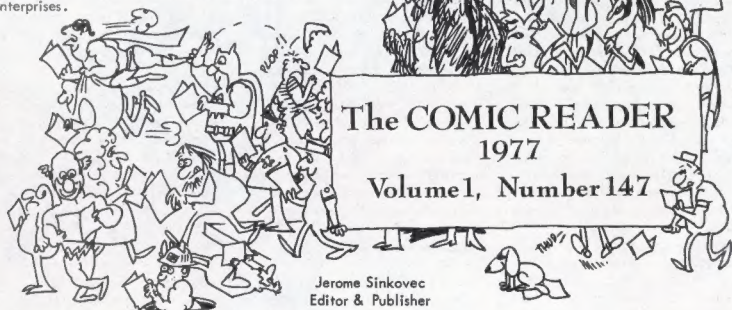
disciple



MARSHALL 77

In This Issue:
Jenette Kahn
Don McGregor

OUR COVERS: Leading off our Summer Special, we have an illustration of an original Marshall Rogers' character called Disciple, who may appear again somewhere, someday. Our back cover, by Editor Mike Tiefenbacher, accompanies this issue's feature comic strip. Disciple is © Marshall Rogers, and Golden Man is © Mike Tiefenbacher and Street Enterprises.



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SUPER SUMMER SPECIAL

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TCR Message

The editors deserve some kind of secretarial award for transcription for this issue. Two full-length interviews by Richard Burton that have appeared over the last year in his COMIC MEDIA NEWS in the U.K., appear here for the first time for American consumption. In addition, a long in-depth feature that appeared in the New York TIMES is included, along with a few of the pictures that have thus far been released. [One of those was the uncredited picture of #145 featuring director Richard Donner and Susannah York who plays Lara.] We have the first in a series of articles retelling the history of TCR, this one by TCR's founder and first editor-publisher, Jerry Bails. And, to round it out, we have a few of our regular news columns, albeit in shorter form. Oh yes, we have a centerspread drawn for us by Tom Sutton of Sheena, the first and only Queen of the Jungle. And a color comic strip.

I'm a bit hesitant to say anything about the strip, expecting as I do the usual reaction if I do. Of course it is the height of egotism for me to run a comic strip that I wrote, drew and colored in a magazine whose circulation of 7000 is almost ensured before we publish this issue. And of course I know that there are those who couldn't care less for any non-professional comic strips. But this is, after all, a fanzine, I am a fan, and so --

I will say that the character has been in existence for three years; that he was the basis for a trial three-issue script written (and rejected) for DC a year ago [in the second issue he met Animal Man and fought Hugo Hammond] and that this is actually the first comic story I've ever done. Other than that, anything I'd say would be chest-beating, and I won't do that.

Since this issue and the next are so close together and because of the New York power blackout, this issue's news section won't be too large or extensive. But never fear, the next issue, our regular September issue, should be in your hands a few short days following this one.

So, have a nice summer, see you in a couple of weeks, and I hope everybody keeps reading comics (this is my JOB, you realize). Bye.

- Mike

Comics News

DC announced their revised schedule for SHOWCASE, now that the book has gone monthly. Following the current run of the new DOOM PATROL (#94-96), POWER GIRL by Paul Levitz and Joe Staton has a three issue try-out. That brings things up to the 100th issue, a 64 page, 60¢er that will feature most of the characters that have ever appeared in SHOWCASE. Steve Englehart scripted.

Then, issues #101-103 feature the return of HAWKMAN in his own book-length feature. The story will run through all three issues and will co-star former HAWKMAN guest Adam Strange in all three issues. An intergalactic war between Rann, Thanagar and Earth will be launched in the first issue's story called, nostalgically, "Mystery In Space." #101 will go on sale in March of '78. Jack C. Harris is the scripter of the trilogy, with Allan Milgrom and Murphy Anderson (the artist longest connected with Hawkman) will be the artists. Joe Kubert (who originated the revised strip back in '62) will contribute the covers.

The three issue try-out of Superman's Father, Jor-El, in a WORLD OF KRYPTON title, begins June, 1978, and will be scripted by Paul Kupperberg.

DC discontinued its Hotline as of August 8th, 1977 -- because it got too hot. The line, originally structured to handle a peak of 60,000 calls a month, was receiving an average of 100,000 the last few months, far too many for the technical abilities of the phone company. There is some hope that it will be reinstated -- but in the meantime, DC will be putting out a monthly newsletter that can be had by subscription sometime in the fall. No details have yet been revealed.

DC's AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS was finally published and is well worth the wait. Mike Gold has a feature on the SUPERMAN film and Paul Levitz and Jack Harris contribute regular columns, but the great bulk of the issue is made up of the JUSTICE

LEAGUE OF AMERICA READER by Mark Gruenwald, an in-depth organization of all known data on the JLA (including placing the base cities of all the heroes in their states for the first time) and is as in-depth an article on a comics series as you'll ever want to see. For those of us who tried to figure where all the JLAers used to park their various planes, boats, etc. in the old secret sanctuary (it even says where THAT is!), the issue is fun reading.

Speaking of Mark, he and his father Myron have condensed the complicated TREATISE ON REALITY IN COMIC BOOKS into a clearer PRIMER ON REALITY IN COMIC BOOKS, which explains how each comic story could exist on some world somewhere, how people travel through time, why there are heroes who have never met each other and a lot of other fascinating information. Copies may be bought from Alternity Enterprises, 319 West 76th Street, Apt. 15, New York City, NY 10023, for the nominal cost of 75¢.

Don Newton broke his drawing hand and had to be replaced on the second issue of STAR HUNTERS by Larry Hama. Don expects to return to work in about a month.

Cary Bates is slated to write the FLASH SPECTACULAR -- out next February. It's only natural since he's written most of THE FLASH stories that have appeared in the last five years.

At Marvel, it looks as though SGT. FURY, originally scheduled to be cancelled with #143, will continue howling in reprint form.

The CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF A THIRD KIND magazine will appear in color magazine form (a la KISS). Archie Goodwin and Jim Starlin are working on it.

Roy Thomas won't be editing MARVEL PREMIERE as of #39, which will be that two-part TORPEDO story that was supposed to appear in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT before it was cancelled. The two-part features the hero-villain from DAREDEVIL and is by Marv Wolfman, inked by Al Milgrom and drawn by the late Bob Brown.

Tom Sutton is working on some of the stories to appear in the new

MAN FROM ATLANTIS book. Its first issue will go on sale in October (cover date January).

Bill Pearson, Charlton Comics Assistant Editor, clarifies the current situation at Charlton: Charlton Publishing Company is no longer publishing Charlton Comics, the last two titles distributed being FIGHTIN' ARMY #129 and GHOST MANOR #34, both dated November. Charlton will now be printing comics for another company to be packaged in plastic bags and sold through variety, dime and grocery chains. All will be reprint editions of Charlton titles. Depending on the success or failure of this new marketing system, the publishers MAY be persuaded to produce new material in the future.

The Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. now has a Marketing Consultant. He's Ronald T. Scott, former head of Capital Distributing Company (CDC) whose expressed aims include the following: To persuade more wholesalers to give a 30% discount on their comics to promote more sales through supermarkets and chain stores (agreed to be the marketplace of the future); more efficient means of handling comics at wholesaler level to ensure more effective distribution to retailers; to encourage more retailers of using in-store displays emphasizing TV and movie tie-ins and other much-needed publicity; to capitalize on the growing acceptance of comics by schools and libraries; redistribution; faster handling of returns through the UPC system and prevention of 3/4 cover stripped comics from finding their way to market; and (and this is most interesting) providing additional allotments of No. 1 issues of new comics titles to wholesalers to avoid sell-outs to speculators who deprive retailers of sales on them. This last item seems to indicate that there actually WAS some sort of full-scale speculation on HOWARD THE DUCK #1. It's good to know that we aren't paranoid enough to have imagined the whole thing.

There is some talk going around that there will be a return of FLASH GORDON to television, no doubt spurred on by STAR WARS' phenomenal success. The thing is, though, it's supposed to be ani-

mated. I know what you're thinking -- but we'll have to wait and see if such IS the case. It's to be a movie-length, prime-time show, in any event.

The King Features comics department tells us that they do not currently have any publication arrangements with any company to publish BEETLE BAILEY, PHANTOM or any of their other strips in comic books, although they are discussing a deal with someone for 1978. It's possible that what we were told about were giveaways or educational comics, we're not sure.

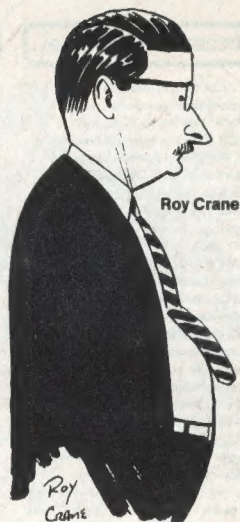
Frank Robbins is retiring from syndicated comic strip work meaning JOHNNY HAZARD will be discontinued. The last Sunday page will appear August 14th, and the final daily installment will appear August 20th. JOHNNY HAZARD was one of our favorites and we're happy that we had the opportunity to run it for as long as we could in the GAZETTE. Good luck, Frank.

Murray Bishoff mentions in the latest BUYER'S GUIDE that Chuck Jones' recommendation got Alfredo P. Alcalá the art job on the RICK O'SHAY strip, which also faced discontinuation because Stan Lynde is going to retire. This will probably mean a decrease in the amount of work Alfredo will be able to contribute to comic books.

Alan Reed, who managed to stretch his career as a cartoon voice from 1960 to the present in his role as the Ralph Cramden-inspired Fred Flintstone, died June 14 at the age of 69. According to Jacob Moraine, he also was the radio voice of JOE PALOOKA. [Unfortunately, our GAZETTE version of this obituary names Paul Frees as the deceased cartoon voice; Frees (Boris Badenov, et al) is not dead. It wasn't noticed until too late to fix there.]

Obituary

Roy Crane, creator of many immortal comic characters including Wash Tubbs, Captain Easy, Buzz Sawyer and Roscoe Sweeny, died July 8th at his home in Orlando, Florida at the age of 75. WASHINGTON TUBBS II began in 1924 and is often credited as one of the first continuity-adventure strips, although a liberal sprinkling of humor always remained in the



strip. Crane was born Royston Campbell Crane November 22, 1901. He began cartooning early, eventually studying with Carl Ed (HAROLD TEEN) at the Chicago Academy of Art in 1920. After experience on the Fort Worth RECORD and the New York WORLD, he sold his first syndicated panel in 1923 to United Features. Though it failed, he eventually worked up WASHINGTON TUBBS II which debuted for NEA April 21, 1924. (He got his job because he admitted to the head of the comics department that he had taken the latter's correspondence art course. He was used in the ads for the course later.) CAPTAIN EASY was introduced in 1929 and became the Sunday strip to WASH TUBBS in 1933. In 1943, Crane switched over to King Features to create BUZZ SAWYER, leaving Leslie Turner to carry on with Wash and Easy. Crane drew the daily and Sunday (featuring Buzz's Navy buddy, Roscoe Sweeny) until 1959, when he went into semi-retirement, with Henry Schlensker on art and Dr. Edwin Granberry on story and Crane as overseer.

Crane attended Hardin-Simmons University and the University of Texas. He won the National Cartoonist Society "Reuben" in 1950 and in 1966 for Best Story Strip. He is survived by his wife and two daughters. [Information taken from Jim Ivey's introduction to the Luna Press edition of Roy Crane's WASH TUBBS, 1974.]

Media News

[Last issue, Rona Blabbit commented at some length on what she thought was interesting from an article that ran in the *New York Times* June 26. Since we also thought the article was interesting we are reproducing the article in toto. It is © 1977, New York Times, Inc.]

IT'S A BIRD! IT'S A PLANE! IT'S A MOVIE! by Susan Heller Anderson

IVERHEATH, ENGLAND - "Lois is very together. She's out to be the best reporter in the world and she doesn't have time for anything else," said Margot Kidder, a slim, hazel-eyed brunette, who should know all about Lois Lane, Superman's girl-reporter sweetheart, since she is playing her in an updated version of the comic-strip adventure which is now shooting here. Budgeted at \$30 million, *SUPERMAN* boasts a cast of such super and near-super stars as Marlon Brando, Gene Hackman, Valerie Perrine, Terence Stamp, Susanannah York, Glenn Ford, Maria Schell, Trevor Howard and -- in the role of the high-flying hero -- burly newcomer Christopher Reeve.

"There are a lot of funny bits in the movie," Miss Kidder continued. "Lois prepares an omelette but Superman cooks it with his X-ray eyes. When they first meet, he drops onto her terrace and gives her an exclusive interview. Then he takes her flying."

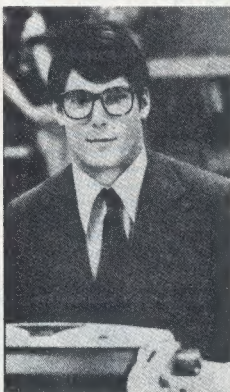
Lois, it seems, is pretty liberated, but not enough to offend middle America. "We make love right away," Miss Kidder said. "But it's tasteful."

The actress paused long enough to light another cigarette with the butt of another. "Lois chain smokes too," she said, "and Superman nags her to give it up."

Anyone who has observed the trend toward escapist entertainment and the fanatical preoccupation with special effects among today's moviemakers can scarcely be stunned to hear more than three hundred grown men and women talking seriously about globe-girdling leaps, X-ray vision and the Man of Steel, to hear them babbling earnestly on and on about such bigger-than-life figures as Clark Kent, Lois Lane, Perry White, General Zod,

Lex Luther and Jor-El, as well as such never-neverlands as Krypton, Smallville and Metropolis.

Nor should anyone be especially surprised to find an aura of high secrecy surrounding the shooting of the film, a passion for privacy stemming partly from the desire to maintain the magic of the movie's countless man-made miracles and partly to keep under wraps the fact that not one, but TWO films are actually being shot. Producers Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler deny this, but it should be remembered that this same pair ran into problems with outraged actors when they turned *THE THREE MUSKETEERS* into two features. This time, the actors'



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contracts spell out a two-film deal.

Shooting began on *SUPERMAN* in late March, after a false start in Rome when the production grew too big for facilities there, and a change of directors from Guy Hamilton, who is a tax exile from England, to Richard Donner, who is chiefly known as the director of *THE OMEN*. The first month revolved around Marlon Brando, who plays Superman's father Jor-El, and his scenes on their home planet, Krypton, and in the *Fortress of Solitude*, where Superman returns periodically to commune with his father. The *Fortress* is being built on the "007" stage of the James Bond movies and is 374 feet long, 160 feet wide and 53 feet high. The mammoth film occupies eight sound stages at Shepperton Studios and has spilled onto six more here at Pinewood Studios north of London.

The screenplay, originally written by Mario Puzo, then rewritten by David and Leslie Newman and Robert Benton, and finally, doctored by Tom Mankiewicz, begins with the comic-book legend of the baby Superman sent to Earth from Krypton by his father just before Krypton explodes. Superman lands in Smallville and is adopted by Jonathan and Martha Kent, who name him Clark.

The flabbergasted foster parents get their first glimpse of Clark's powers when Pa Kent is nearly crushed by a car and the three-year-old child saves him by lifting it up. When Clark is 18, he feels compelled to discover his origins, travels to the North Pole, builds the *Fortress Of Solitude* and communes with his by-now dead father, who tells the young man to use his powers for the good of mankind and never to reveal his identity. After absorbing all the world's wisdom, Superman, now 30-ish, goes to Metropolis and takes a job as a newspaper reporter and assumes the identity of the mild-mannered Clark Kent. A newspaper, he figures, is a good place to keep abreast of disasters.

Here in Iverheath, the main production crew has been filming sequences at *The Daily Planet*, a depressingly realistic newspaper office modeled after *The New York Daily News*, where they will actually shoot on location next week. The place is a mess. Styrofoam cups half-filled with scum-covered coffee, overflowing ashtrays and wastebaskets, a water cooler that doesn't work. Endless rows of desks that are littered with broken pencils, tattered dictionaries and the debris of daily journalism. *Daily Planet* letterhead stationary protrudes from the typing pool's machines. Because of the movie cameras, the temperature is 100 degrees and has climbed to as high as 136, setting off the sprinkler system and shutting down shooting for the day.

Christopher Reeve, the 24 year old actor chosen for the title part, emphasizes his square jaw by chewing gum. A group of seedy looking reporters, pads and pencils in hand, fill the office of editor Perry White, played by the long-ago child star Jackie Cooper. The Manhattan skyline glows through the venetian blinds. Cooper holds an issue of the *Daily Planet* with a banner headline reading, "Caped Wonder Stuns City."

"We're having problems with Superman's cape," Yvonne Blake,

the costume designer, said. "It needs to billow in flight and go through fire." Superman's costume is a shimmering blue body stocking emblazoned with the familiar red and gold triangular "S," red trunks and boots, and originally called for false muscles to be worn underneath. Now the muscles aren't needed, since Reeve has plenty of his own.

Director Richard Donner paced impatiently about wearing jeans at half-mast, white socks, brown Weejuns, purple-lensed aviator glasses and two walkie-talkies. "This picture is the biggest Erector set given to the biggest kid in the world," he said. "We're playing it straight. It's bigger than life, so we're trying to keep it real. Often, we'd cross the line out of humor into camp, and then we'd pull back."

"It's a picture made for adults that children will go to see," he went on, careful not to reveal too much of the plot. "The first half is the comic-book fable. Superman's birth on Krypton, landing on Earth, building his Fortress and going to Metropolis. His first deed is to save Lois Lane's life, and that's the start of our story."

As in the comics, Lois falls for Superman and rejects the be-

spectacled, seemingly timid Clark. But Superman does not abuse his powers. "Of course, he could see through Lois' clothes if he wanted," Donner said, "But he's not that kind of guy."

Presumably, the film will be pervaded with a certain humor, and even the villains will have their comic sides. Lex Luthor, played by Gene Hackman, is a sort of real estate speculator. "He lives under Metropolis because he's too cheap to invest in above-ground property," Donner said. Three super villains, originally from Krypton and thus possessing the same powers as Superman, are the counterparts of three earth villains and they team up to practically destroy the world. But global tragedy is averted in the nick of time, thanks to Superman and a few choice special effects. "Our Superman HAS to fly," said Donner. "He saves the WORLD." And the small-scale miracles are nice too. On his way home, he rescues a cat in a tree.

"This has by far the most ambitious special effects of any movie yet made," said production designer John Barry, the man who was also responsible for the dazzling effects in *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* and *STAR WARS*.

"There will be an earthquake, and

Superman will hold up the freeways. And the super-villains will erase the heads on Mount Rushmore and carve their own heads. We'll have a model of the real thing and explode it off. And, by a model, I don't mean something tiny -- the heads are six feet tall."

A lot of money is on the line with *SUPERMAN*, and it was raised by Ilya Salkind's father, Alexander. The question is will enough people turn out to see this fleshing-out of a childhood fantasy figure. "If you count the people who are comic buffs, fans of Brando and Hackman and the other stars, and the science fiction freaks who loved *STAR WARS*, that's our audience," said the 29 year old Salkind, betraying no fear of financial failure. "The picture will have a balance of humor and fantasy, legend and sincerity. When Brando talks with his son, you'll weep."

As Eve, the girlfriend of Luthor, Valerie Perrine will be no crying matter. "Eve is absolutely outrageous," said Miss Perrine. "Slightly tart and tacky. No taste. When I walk into Superman's Fortress of Solitude, which is all white, I say, 'Don't you want some bullfight posters or [Continued on page nineteen]



GOLDEN MAN

LAKELAND HOSPITAL, MOTOR CITY, MICHIGAN ...

MORNING MR. BROWN. HOW'S THE HIP FEELING & STILL STIFF?

THAT YOU, DR. THOMAS? MY HIP COULDN'T BOTHER ME TODAY! MY SON GARY IS TWO FOR THREE IN TODAY'S GAME!

THE PITCH IS LOW FOR BALL THREE... RUSSELL IS HAVING HIS CONTROL PROBLEMS, HAVING ALREADY WALKED THIRTEEN.

REALLY? THAT'S GREAT! NOW TELL ME IF THIS HURTS — THERE! YOU'RE COMING ALONG FINE... ARE THE WHEELS WINNING?

NO, THEY'RE A RUN BACK IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH — BUT GARY'S ON THIRD — THEY'LL DO IT!

ROSA'S SHARPE TOWARD LEFT FOR BURTON, WHO SQUARES TO BUNT — AND TAKES FOR BALL FOUR. KILLIAN CAME CHIPPING DOWN THE LINE

DID I SAY YESTERDAY THAT WE'LL BE GOING INTO WATER THERAPY NEXT WEEK? THAT SHOULD HELP...

COULD WE TALK ABOUT THIS LATER? I'VE GOT A HUNCH THE SUICIDE SQUEEZE IS ON...

SURE...

A BEAUTY TOWNED FIRST BASE, FIALA GAZE — FIRST BASE, FIRES IT TO HANDS IT, FIRES IT TO HUTCHINSOAT AT THE PLATE — THE SLIDE — SAFE! CHAVEZ'S TRYING FOR THIRD — VAREANQUEZ'S THROW — WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM FOR A BULLETIN JUST IN

WHY THOSE DIRTY — WHERE'S THE BALL GAME? IT'S THE NINTH!

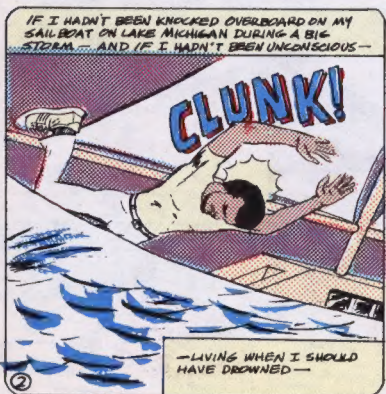
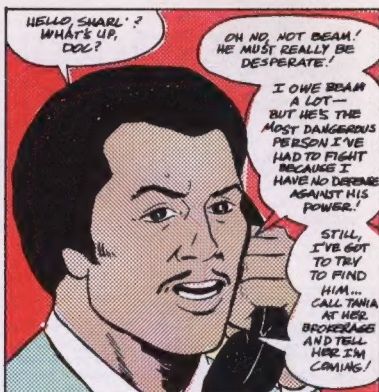
SHHH, MR. BROWN.

CONVICTED AND PROSECUTED ATTEMPTED MURDERER JAMES BEANER AKA. JIM BEANER BECAUSE OF HIS BEANER PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, BEANER FROM THE STATE HOSPITAL ESCAPED FROM THE STATE HOSPITAL IN WHICH AUTHORITIES WERE UNSURE

I WONDER IF EDDIE HAS HEARD THE NEWS YET? HE BROUGHT JIM BEANER IN THE LAST TIME — I'LL CALL HIM... HE'S PROBABLY AT HIS RESTAURANT BY NOW...

WHAT HAPPENED?

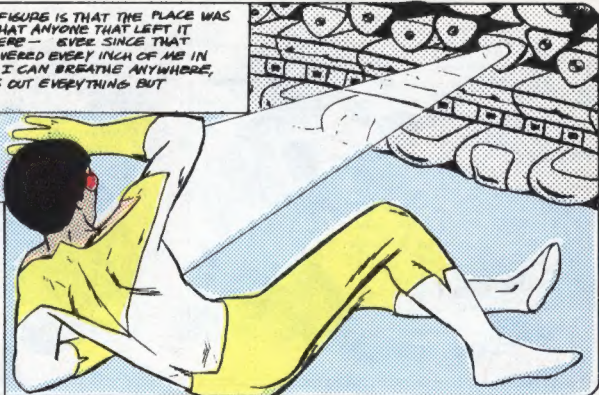
TO SCHEDULED AND GRAMMING... — SO, DESPITE MORRINE'S BAGGAGE CATCH, JILBER'S TAG MISSED REED AND THE WHEELS WOULD



THE ONLY THING I CAN FIGURE IS THAT THE PLACE WAS THERE TO MAKE SURE THAT ANYONE THAT LEFT IT WOULD SURVIVE ANYWHERE — EVER SINCE THAT ULTRA BRIGHT LIGHT COVERED EVERY INCH OF ME IN A MICROSCOPIC AURA, I CAN BREATHE ANYWHERE, AS IF THE AURA FILTERS OUT EVERYTHING BUT PURE OXYGEN.

IN FACT, NOTHING CAN TOUCH ME — INCLUDING ME. I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO TACTILE SENSE.

THE WHOLE THING IS A DREAM — BUT WHEN I WOKE UP ON THE SURFACE IT WAS ALL VERY REAL. I SWAM OVER SIXTY MILES TO SHORE — AND NEVER EVEN BREATHED HARD. SOMEHOW, MY STRENGTH HAS INCREASED INCREDIBLY.



YOU DON'T JUST IGNORE SOMETHING LIKE THIS — AND AFTER I HAD CONVINCED TANIA AND SHARLEEN THAT I HADN'T HALLUCINATED THE WHOLE THING —



WE AGREED THAT I SHOULDN'T WASTE WHAT I'D BEEN GIVEN — AND THAT I SHOULD FIGHT CRIME.

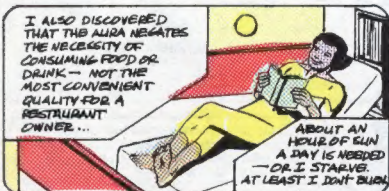
BUT I SOON DISCOVERED MY LIMITATIONS...



BULLETS BRUISE — I TRY TO AVOID GUNS WHEN POSSIBLE — BUT PUNCHES ARE NOTHING.

OWW! IT'S LIKE HITTING A STATUE!

I ALSO DISCOVERED THAT THE AURA NEGATES THE NECESSITY OF CONSUMING FOOD OR DRINK — NOT THE MOST CONVENIENT QUALITY FOR A RESTAURANT OWNER...



ABOUT AN HOUR OF SUN A DAY IS NEEDED — OR I STARVE. AT LEAST I DON'T BURN.

SHARLEEN CAME UP WITH THE "SUPER" NAME —



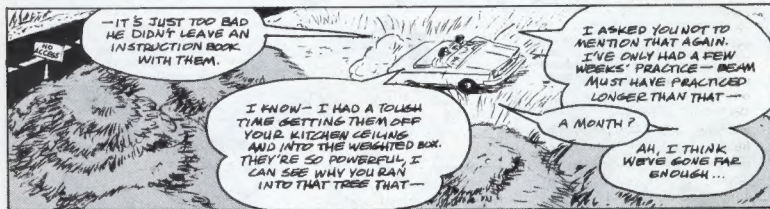
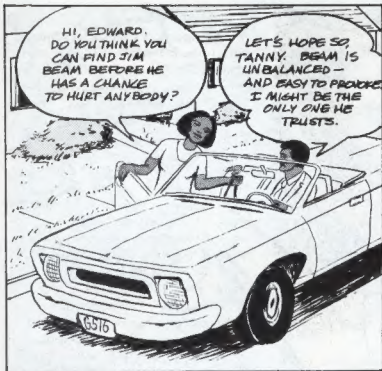
FATHER OF SAMMY DAVIS, JR., SHE SAID...

—AND THEN TANIA PAINTED THE 'S' ON MY AURA.

I SUPPOSE THE ABSENCE OF OPPOSITION TO MY "SECONDARY CAREER" BY EITHER OF THEM COULD BE BECAUSE THEY REALIZED HOW BORED I WAS RUNNING MY FATHER'S BUSINESS.



THE WHOLE THING CAME WHEN NEEDED.



Interview

Perhaps I should be openly honest and declare a bias toward this issue's INTERVIEW subject -- Don McGregor. I initially met Don on my first visit to the U.S.A. in 1974 and have kept in contact with him since then, seeing him on each of my successive visits to the U.S. since that time, so I don't think Don would think me presumptuous to say that I count him among my friends. In addition to all that, I am a great fan of Don McGregor, comic book writer (it would be foolish of me to pretend otherwise with a LoC in JUNGLE ACTION #18 putting that fact officially on record). To me Don is one of a very rare breed of people -- a thinking, caring comic book writer. You can never mistake a Don McGregor story, its words almost fall off the page as though it is fighting for an equal share of the space with the artwork. The art in turn vies with Don's words to see who can be the most descriptive; Don pumps life into his stories and they throb with a realism unmatched by most other writers. To analyze his work any further requires a full-length feature article, not a brief introduction piece such as this, and it is something Don usually does better himself.

Unfortunately, as McGregor fans realize, not everybody shares the above views. "Controversial" was a label pinned to Don's style very early on. It could be argued -- and was -- that Don was writing over the heads of the kids for whom comic books are designed. Though his books for Marvel were often visually stunning they were poor sellers, and however creatively innovative a book is, that very fact triggers the automatic death sentence. In mid-1976 The Black Panther, Killraven and Luke Cage were taken out of Don's hands and, with the exception of Killraven, were put back onto 'safer' more traditional comic book lines. Don McGregor was a victim -- a victim of a system that says, "Thou shalt not go too far; or use big words!"

The interview you are about to read is the tip of an iceberg. The iceberg was formed in 1974 when Nick Landau and I conducted a long, in-depth interview with Don for the then-functioning COMIC MEDIA. 1975 came round; no CM, so I met Don and did another inter-



view to update the main one. 1976, still no sign of CM, so Don kindly consented to a second update -- the one you are about to read. What follows is a brief excursion into the incredible mind of Mr. McGregor. One day -- God and Nick Landau willing -- all three parts will be brought together to form a grand tour round this mind, write and let me know if you want to take that trip.

In the meantime, the excursion begins here with Don opening the proceedings:

DON: It'll be an interesting progression going from two or three years ago when we did the first one. Strangely enough in the first interview, there's indications of at least my feelings of vulnerability about Marvel Comics. I think there was a very creative time involved between 1971-74 when all the books expanded. It was because of the fact that no one editor could go over all the books and say what could or could not be. So it gave rise to people like Gerber, myself, Englehart, a few others, to do material that they would not be able to do otherwise, because nobody was reading the stuff beforehand and saying, "Hey, you can't do this!" In fact, I think it was a good time for comics because there was an option -- the audience had a choice to make. People who have become disillusioned with comics might stay because they liked a particular kind of thing that Don McGregor, Steve Gerber, or whoever, was doing and might not just give it up as being that they had got too old for comics; that comics no longer related to them.

It's not the case now. I think in most instances they've weeded out all the mavericks. This is very obvious if you look at the books now; anybody who didn't do exactly what they were told is out.

Regarding my "Panther Vs. The Klan" stuff. Originally they wanted me to do something like the Soas of the Serpent. I said, no, that's not the point. The point isn't even the Klu Klux Klan really, that's just one symptom I wanted to get at. We were just beginning to see by the last issue of JUNGLE ACTION, the "Wind Eagle" issue, how expansive that series was going to be. It was really going to branch out and scarcely anything you've seen in the first five parts of "Panther Vs. The Klan" is what really has happened. You don't understand anybody's motivations and nearly everybody is lying! In going back over those issues -- especially the last part, "Wind Eagle In Flight" -- It begins to give you some idea of some of the things that weren't true that you might have taken for the truth. It's part of what I really wanted to get at with the series.

RICHARD: Was Wind Eagle going to be a regular character or was he just to appear in that one issue?

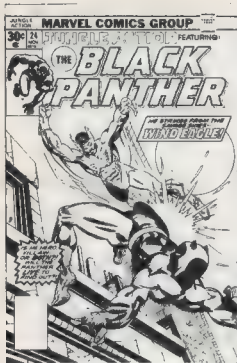
DON: No, he was going to be around for quite a while in "Panther Vs. The Klan," he would have been a key figure -- an interesting character, too.

RICHARD: Was he meant to be a black superhero?

DON: He was Puerto Rican.

RICHARD: I ask because the coloring seemed to be very inconsistent in that issue.

DON: Yes, it certainly was. They really slaughtered that double page spread, there's no reason for it the way they colored it. It was all supposed to be in shades of blues and greens, and inside the lettering of the title, "Wind Eagle In Flight," you were supposed to see the Panther going continuously round and round strapped to the water wheel: at least the "In Flight" part was supposed to have him tied to the wheel, "Wind Eagle" was supposed to have him swooping down through the letters flying from left to right. Every-



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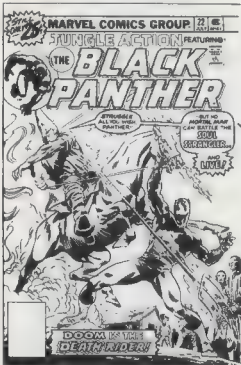
thing, as I said, was supposed to be in shades of blue and green -- you don't have a yellow golf course! In the coloring the book was really slaughtered which was unfortunate because Keith Pollard did a beautiful finishing up job on it.

Strangely enough, you know, there've been pages drawn for the next part -- "Dragon Soldiers Marching As To War" -- because we were supposed to have at least one more issue.

RICHARD: How much notice did you have of cancellation?

DON: I'd written the first thirteen pages of "Wind-Eagle In Flight" in January (1976) and had plotted the next one which Rich Buckler had drawn five pages of completely. We had laid out up to page 13 or 14 of that one. Still I didn't know that the book was going to be cancelled but that was several editors before the final axe came. With all the upheaval at Marvel Rich left and never finished the "Wind Eagle" story which had to be finished up by Keith, but that decision had been made by the time they'd already decided to kill the series. I had four pages left and I wasn't about to change any of it because there was no way in four pages that I could have done anything, it was much too complex a story to try. I was rather dismayed. They called me in... this is one of the problems we began to get into a while back. That was that they became so afraid of the Klan stuff that first they wouldn't promote it anywhere. They should have told the media

that we were handling this sort of subject in comics, but they got so afraid of it and got such terrible covers on the books that I can't take total responsibility. I may have overjudged the readership in thinking that they could adapt to such a startling change in a strip -- changing all the supporting cast except for a very few characters, but that way I felt the strip would stay alive and that it would be continually intriguing and that doing something dramatically, thematically in "Panther Vs. The Klan" that I was doing in "Panther's Rage." One of the things I didn't get to do that I would've liked to have done is that I wanted this novel to have Monica really as the focal point character. Her evolution and her changes as a personality and as a human being as



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opposed to what we witnessed in "Panther's Rage" with T'Challa.

I already had a third novel planned -- "The Panther In The Land Of The Apartheid" -- which would have taken him to South Africa and some of the problems there. It would have been interesting because it was a 'quest' type of story, kind of an epic mythology set in South Africa, if you will, as T'Challa searches for his mother. You realize that nobody has ever mentioned anything about his mother -- they'll probably do it now, especially if they read this interview! "Ah hah! Yes, we always had this in mind!" That would be typical of the attitudes at Marvel.

RICHARD: The letters column in the last issue of JUNGLE ACTION showed that you were getting some amazing reactions to the Klan series. Did you hear much from people who had some direct connection with the Klan?

DON: Yes. Strangely enough it seemed like the Klan books appealed to a much younger audience than "Panther's Rage." I find that curious. There were a lot more handwritten letters than "Panther's Rage" received, basically, dissertations! Which I loved; it was great to see an audience participating. As a writer, as an artist, that's part of what you exist for. That kind of audience participation to see if you're reaching them, to see if you've got a communication going. Unfortunately it doesn't pay the rent or help you survive.

But it's very strange, and I've said this before, maybe I've even said it in an earlier part of one of these interviews, that science fiction and jungle comics have not been notoriously best-sellers in the comic book field and I did last over three years. I think that one of the problems is that when you don't do a vast quantity of books, if the couple of books you are doing don't do fantastically well -- and don't forget, Killraven and Panther were on the bottom of the print run, they were seldom hyped by the Bullpen system -- that it's startling that they survived as long as they did. I don't think they failed because we were doing anything wrong, it's because they didn't know how to market them. There were obviously a lot of places that wanted the books but never got

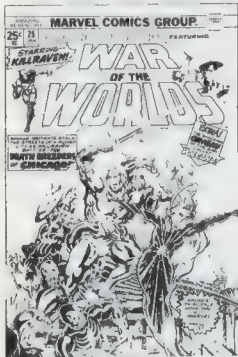
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them. There were many letters coming in from people complaining that their dealers never received Killraven or Panther and that those were people that were going out searching for them. So if they can't find it, what's going to happen to the average buyer? We may have gotten to be a bit esoteric at times, I suppose.

RICHARD: Overall, do you think that perhaps you were aiming too high, expecting too much of your readers?

DON: I don't know, it's difficult to say. Obviously, with the readers who communicated back to me I hadn't, but that doesn't mean to say that with some of them I did. We may have turned some off but I don't believe that all comics have to be all things for all people. This is one of the problems, trying to find the lowest common denominator,



nator, that nobody can do anything divergent; you have to maintain the status quo... It's like being back in the military. I'll give you an example. Originally the dedication on the last Killraven was across the top of the page. I was told that this didn't leave room for the intro copy. It's the last book, I said, what do you care? "We have to have all the books uniform," they said. But why? It's not going to really explain anything to people picking up that book for the last time because this particular story has nothing to do with any of that, so what's the reason? "Well, we have to have the books uniform, we have to have them standardized."

We also ran into some trouble with all the editorial changes at

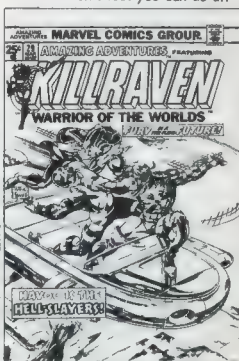
Marvel. New edicts were coming down with each change. One editor told me that I would no longer be doing the Luke Cage book and that one of the editors that was coming in was totally against my writing. That kind of frightened me a bit. So I went to see the new editor thinking that it would be best for us to talk it out, not that I'm very good at that, I can express myself better through my writing. I went to see the upcoming editor and said, what's going on? Is this true? He said, "No, no. In fact I'm going to give you more work. The only reason you're not going to do the Cage book is because the other editor wants to write it." I began to feel, somebody's not telling me the truth. These are opposing tales I've been told and this guy has no reason to be lying to me as far as I can tell. It was like being caught up in the web of some political intrigue; Watergate immediately springs to mind, though this is on a much lower level. Who can you trust? These are people I've known for years, somebody's not telling the truth. And immediately the other editor wanted to know, "What did this guy tell you? What happened?" I said, well nothing, and just passed it off. That editor came to be and another editor came in and I was called in to be told that I'd no longer be doing the Black Panther either because, "I was too close to the black experience!"

I looked at my hands and said, that's very strange! I said, by that do you mean you want your black characters to be as bland as your white characters? "No, no, no. It's just that we can't have you doing the kind of stuff you're doing. But we like the Killraven book and you can still do that." Then more editorial changes came about and I was told even Killraven was cancelled. The day I found out that "War Of The Worlds" was finished Craig (Russell) came in and we were both fairly despondent about it. We were sitting around talking about the death of the book and this one person came up, "Oh, hey, Craig, you can work with me now!" It was just like vultures flying around. These people I've known for such a long time -- they give you no respect at all.

RICHARD: How much of Killraven's future did you have planned?

DON: One of the fascinating things is that you don't know everything about the character yet. There's still a lot of mystery as to who and what he is. That's fascinating to me because the strip can continue to evolve rather than stagnating in just one place, you're learning about him all the time. Part of all the books, basically, are concerned with his personality and you're learning new things about him all the time.

That'll be one of the interesting things about this Dragonshade character I've developed for THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU magazine (since cancelled - Richard). We have an opening story of 30 pages and you'll know a lot about him, yet, on another level, you'll know nothing about him. There'll be a lot of provocative statements made about him and by him but not everything is revealed because I don't feel you can do all



that in one book and if you can then he's a pretty plastic character without any doubt.

I like Dragonshade, he has a kind of mythic quality about him. He's a character who realizes he is out of his time and space, while he's become a vigilante he's a vigilante with heart and introspection. He knows that what he's doing isn't right. As he says, he's "the last dragon spitting useless flame." He's certainly very valid. It's kind of an updating of the Zorro legends, The Shadow, kind of an examination of the 'Death Wish' mentality, this whole kind of vigilantism that we've come about. It's an examination of those causes. As Dragonshade tells a couple of CIA members, "This is the only

thing that gives me the illusion, the fantasy that I can taste justice!" But he realizes he can't. He also at one point says he knows he can't win, that his cause is destined for death. He knows that from the beginning, the least that he can hope for is that he will survive and, as he puts it, "Survive even the dreams that died in shadows."

With the Dragonshade strip I decided I could go one way or the other. I could now say I'm going to caw tow and behave myself and not do anything with it, but there has to be a reason to write something. I'm not against being paid for it but that can't be the only reason that I'm writing something. You're reaching a huge audience out there. You have some responsibility to entertain them, to stimulate them, to give them something more than they had before they read it. That's my attitude -- and look where it got me!

RICHARD: Can you say a little more about "Dragonshade?" For instance, will it be a straight kung fu strip?

DON: It'll be unlike anything done in that genre. There's no need for me to do a duplicate of Shang Chi, it's done already by Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy. It will take to task a lot of the conventions of the kung fu genre. In fact one sequence will deal with impotence which kind of contradicts the whole macho element of the martial arts syndrome as it's appeared in fiction so far. And there will be, I hope, a quiet and tasteful scene involving sexual contact, again which we don't have much of in comics. That's one of the things I was adamant about with Killraven and Panther, that the characters should have a sexual identity, there's nothing wrong with that. Obviously M'Shulla and Carmilla don't just hold hands. One of the facts that I wanted to include in the strip if it did continue was to have Carmilla become pregnant. When I first told Craig he said, "That's it! That's the last thing you'll do! They'll hand you your head! You can't do that!"

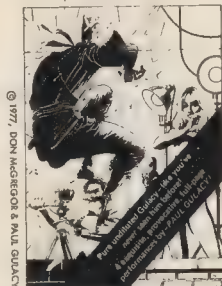
RICHARD: What about Luke Cage?

DON: I feel very sad about the POWER MAN stuff. Frank (Robbins) really understands the New

York scene because he's lived in it all his life and most of the places that were depicted in the stories that Frank did were real, they really exist. The restaurants exist, the buildings exist, the entire ambivalence that he gave to Manhattan, as opposed to the 'Marvel Manhattan' that normally is depicted in the books. Manhattan is almost a character, a personality in a Luke Cage strip. An extra character against which all the human figures are acting out their dramas.

RICHARD: And the soda machine...

DON: The soda machine, the IRS (Internal Revenue Service); I felt that Cage ought to become more of a human being. He's not Shaft, he's just a street-tough black, he becomes personified with all of us



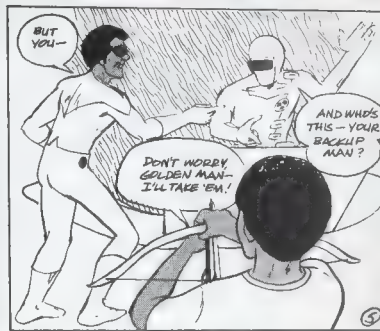
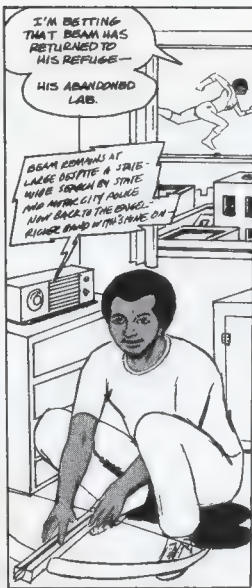
because he's up against the very things that we're all up against. You don't have to live in America to sympathize with what he's going through. All countries have a form of taxation and a kind of mechanization that is stealing much of our individuality and humanity from us. So that became the important thing, Cage is synonymous with that and I feel in that way he becomes a very sympathetic character to the audience. They say, "Yeah, goddamn-it! I went to a soda machine and I couldn't get my money back!" Of course I stretched some of the points to absurdity just to have a good time with it but also to make the point continuously so it's another facet of the Cage strip. Unfortunately, I was never able to make that reach fruition, I wish we had been able to. I was on and off that book so many times. After I'd done two issues, I was told "Finish

off your trilogy and do one for Frank Robbins and that's it, you won't be doing the strip any more." So if you notice in the last Piranha Jones and Cockroach Hamilton story there's very little to do with Grassy Moss and Charlton Grudge because I felt that if another writer was taking over the book there seemed to be no sense in me using sub plots that he's probably not going to want to follow up on. I wouldn't have done "The Fire This Time" (POWER MAN #32) at the point that I did it because I know they would've handed me my head. This is not 1968. This is not the time for social protest. People have become much more apothetic and conservative. Telling a story that was set in Jamaica, Queens about the firebombing of a black family is likely to arouse a kind of ire that, say, doing the Black Panther set in Wakanda won't. Because even though you're making valid points with a strip like that the audience can say, well that's not me, that's not here, and that's okay, but if you use a place where they all live and is a real place in itself then they can react much more emotionally, they can't duck the issues quite as easily. I wouldn't have done it quite at the time I did because I know the kind of reaction we were likely to receive.

I feel very sad about losing Cage. It was a book I was very close to -- I miss all the characters. I had Killraven planned for the next two years and just by speaking about the Panther, if you know there are going to be novels, you know I had much of the "Panther Vs. The Klan" plotted out and had a third one in the working stages. Unfortunately while I don't think that the first "Panther Vs. The Klan" books are as well done as some of the "Panther's Rage" books, I was going through quite a few personal hassles at the time. My family had broken up under very trying circumstances.

I liked Luke Cage, I liked him a lot. He didn't break. He stood up to it to some extent. He may have been dismayed by what was occurring but he still, in his own way, was managing to survive it.

Since completing this interview, of course, DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU has been axed from Marvel's black & white line and with it the appearance of Dragon-

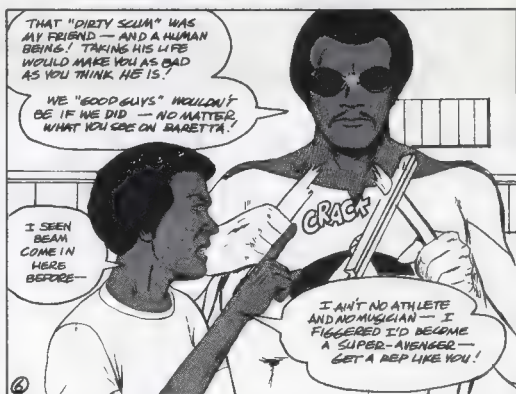
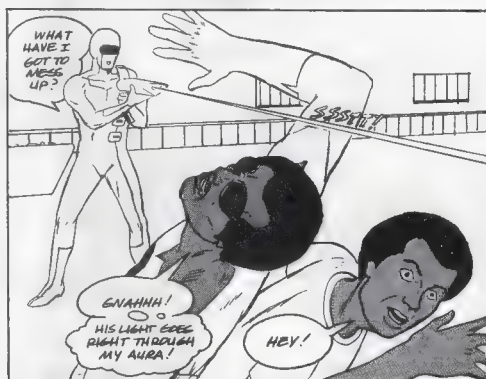




THE
QUEEN



THE DUNGLES



shade. However advertising in various fandom magazines has announced that Don has a book coming out this summer featuring a character called Dragonflame. As of going to press there is no confirmation from Don, but it is highly likely that this is based on the character Don created for Marvel. - Richard Burton

PS: Dragonflame can be ordered from the publisher, Fictioneer Books Ltd, Lakemont, GA 30552, for \$5 per copy, postpaid.

TCR History

This November's issue will mark the 150th issue of THE COMIC READER. It will be our fiftieth issue and we felt that there was a very interesting story involving the editor-publishers of those first 100 issues that could be had by contacting the original editors and having them tell their stories. We'll be serializing their stories until our anniversary issue (which will mark our fifth year of publication)

JERRY BAILS
#1 - 25

THE COMIC READER began under the title ON THE DRAWING BOARD as a news feature in the very first issue of ALTER EGO (March, 1961), which is rightfully credited as the point of origin of the current comics fan movement. TCR is the longest running feature of comics fandom, bringing fans some sense of continuity and fan-nish interest -- without the commercialism -- since the beginning.

ALTER EGO #1 was a dittoed publication, complete copies of which probably went out to at most two hundred fans. I know the print run was limited because I used black spirit masters (rather than the longer-running purple) to reproduce art, such as Roy Thomas' parody, "The Bestest League Of America," and the cover of DC's first SECRET ORIGINS giant. Believe me, only an insane man would try to transfer complex line drawings to a ditto master by hand, but I did -- and I faithfully reproduced every line (thick and thin) of the silver proof of the SECRET ORIGINS cover, which had been provided by Julius Schwartz. Fact is, all the news in that first issue was supplied by Julie Schwartz, who I met in person earlier that year on a trip to the Big Apple.

Among the juiciest items of news in that first issue -- the announcement of the first double-Flash tale -- scooped the comics themselves by five months. That was unheard of in those days. (Now, you only have to scoop every other newshawk running a column here and there.)

The second ON THE DRAWING BOARD appeared in ALTER EGO #2, while the third installment appeared in THE COMICCOLLECTOR #1, comic fandom's first adzine (also 1961). My object was to get the news out as fast as possible, so I ran the feature as part of any publication coming off my little portable spirit duplicator.

With the fourth installment, OTDB became a separate newsletter, available without charge for a SASE. It was still being dittoed, but I soon had help in the form of a New York-area teen fan, George Pacinda, who made the rounds of the comics houses after school. He managed to add Gold Key's Bill Harris and a secret source from Marvel's Bullpen to our list of sources. Stan Lee was reluctant to release news at that stage. It seems the publishers still felt their competitors were out to steal their best ideas and beat them to the newsstands. (A not entirely unjustified feeling.) Fortunately, the atmosphere toward news has relaxed considerably since that time.

With issue #8, OTDB officially became THE COMIC READER, which I believed was a more appropriate title because only some of our news items were far enough in advance to catch the art on the drawing board. Occasionally, I'd use sub-titles on news items like ON THE DRAWING BOARD, ON THE FOUR COLOR PRESSES, and ON THE STANDS. But THE COMIC READER has been the title since March, 1962.

I continued to publish TCR irregularly (from twice monthly to bi-monthly) depending on the flow of news. There were even COMIC READER EXTRAS in places like Mike Vosburg's MASQUERADER and G.B. Love's ROCKET'S BLAST, when I couldn't get the news out fast enough myself.

TCR became the official organ of the Academy Of Comic Book Fans and Collectors by 1963, running the Alley Polls and conducting other Academy business. We

were still publishing scoops like the Julie Schwartz takeover of BATMAN and obscure items like the Captain Marvel imitation running in England's TV, JR, of May, 1964. It was fun but I was becoming interested in other projects -- like the Microfilm Library of Comic Art and other publication projects, so with #26 I turned TCR over to Glen Johnson. My last issue (#25) appeared for May, 1964 and was sent out only to Executive Board members of the Academy. Glen established TCR as a general newswire for all fans, and, I'm happy to say, kept the tradition alive. The improvement since my tenure as publishing editor has made me feel pretty good, although I can't take one iota of credit. However, it has justified my faith in comics fandom. Long live THE COMIC READER!

- Jerry G. Bails

[Continued from page six]

something?"

As Superman-Clark Kent, Christopher Reeve has actually landed two parts. He is terribly earnest about the former and tongue-in-cheek about the latter. "This is my wet look, he said, touching his dyed dark brown hair. "Clark got stuck somewhere in the '60s. He's really Superman acting a schleppeur and having a good time at it."

Reeve, a native of New York, has an enormous neck and shoulders, the result of six months of body-building for the part. He demonstrated his Clark Kent posture -- dropping his shoulders and curling his spine. "When I'm Superman, I pull up like this..." Hands confidently on hips, he grew about three inches.

He talked about Superman in the first person. "I prevent an earthquake. I repair Golden Gate Bridge and Boulder Dam. I walk through fire and I prevent a nuclear explosion in Southern California."

He thinks there's more to the movie than special effects. "Who cares about some guy flying around? This story is about someone coming from far away, alone, with a purpose. What makes him a hero is how he uses his powers. It's about believing, rather than about being cynical.

He removed his Clark Kent glasses, fluffed out his hair, and said, "I'm here, fighting for truth, justice and the American way."

Interview

Interviewing Jenette Kahn is not easy task. Perhaps I should rephrase that statement: Trying to get an interview with Jenette Kahn is not an easy task. On arriving in New York last September one of my first tasks was to contact her secretary and fix an appointment. This bit was no trouble. But it was three weeks and several cancelled appointments later that I was finally able to interview the mysterious Ms. Kahn. This is meant in no way to be a complaint but as a depiction of how busy DC's new publisher is. Her office bears witness to that fact as piles of books and magazines stand on the floor and pictures still lie in their packaging, all awaiting time to be placed in their proper positions -- time which is needed for important company matters at the moment.

"The mysterious Ms. Kahn." I say this because less than a year ago Jenette Kahn's name was totally unknown to comics fans. Suddenly, there she was, occupying one of the most powerful positions in the comics industry and replacing Carmine Infantino, someone whose name has been synonymous with comics for as long as most fans can remember. "Who is she?" "What the hell can she do?" screamed a stunned fandom. Well, the first question was answered by news-zines that reported her backround as a publisher of juvenile's magazines like DYNAMITE and SMASH. The second question has been answered in part by the tremendous activity and changes that have taken place at DC since she arrived, and I hope that the following interview will answer the other part of that question.

RICHARD: So, how does it feel to be publisher of one of the world's biggest comic book companies?

JENETTE: Nifty!

RICHARD: From editing two magazines as you had with SMASH and DYNAMITE, do you find it more taxing to oversee several dozen different titles?

JENETTE: Ah! I also previously had a magazine called KIDS, that was written and illustrated for kids by other kids. I oversaw each of



those individually and obviously it is a very different kind of experience here at DC. I do not know if it is more taxing, maybe in some ways it's a little less gratifying. You can put all your creative energies into one page a day on a thirty page monthly magazine and get the very best you possibly can on each page. Your own personal stamp is something you are very proud to put on it. When you have 35 magazines you can't, let's say, engrave your own initials on them very easily. That's the nature of the industry and something I knew I'd have to get used to coming over to DC.

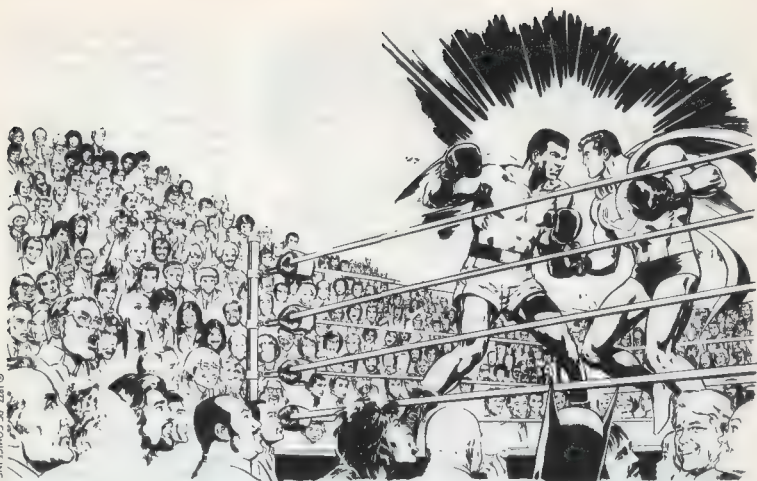
RICHARD: How are your plans for changes and the future of DC progressing?

JENETTE: There are two major kinds of changes I suppose. One is related to the internal functions of DC and it's really people involved, the editorial staff here and the talent -- the writers and artists. The second change will come in the books themselves as my prime concern is to change the price of the comic book.

If you know your comic book history, not too many years ago Martin Goodman (then publisher of Marvel) made a bid for a larger share of the newsstand space by offering 50% off the cover price of comics rather than the traditional 40%, which all magazines gave. By doing that every wholesaler said, "Hey, wow, 50% off! Goodbye DC, goodbye Archie, goodbye Charlton." National said, "We'll hold firm, we won't capitulate," and a few

months later gave 50% off! And that was the beginning of the reprint books, more and more advertising, leading to, finally, today's 17 page comic -- and also the price increase to 30¢.

The package is absolutely untenable; 17 pages, and reprints, and a 30¢ cover price. There's no place to go really. And yet there was a time when you paid 10¢ for a comic book and 10¢ for TIME magazine. The trouble was that we didn't keep up with the rest of the industry in price rises. Twenty years passed before we dared to make the great leap to... 12¢! Then we tried 15¢ -- but they didn't like it in Phoenix, Arizona -- so we went back down to 12¢! We then found that we had to go to 15¢ so we tried it again, then 20¢, 25¢ and now 30¢. But, still all of that is far too low. TIME magazine is now \$1, we should be \$1, and that's where we're headed. It's a major experiment but I think it's the answer not just for us but for Marvel, Archie, any comic book company. The dollar package is just like the Golden Age format in that we will be having 80 pages; 14 of ads and 66 of all-new material. It'll be a chance for writers and artists to do stories of any length that seems appropriate to the story rather than cramming it into a meagre 17 pages. It is going to give the wholesaler and retailer a chance to make money. The retailer who for years has not wanted to carry comic books in his shop, saying, "Why should I? What does 50% off 30¢ mean to anybody? All they do is clog up my newsstand and keep people from buying PLAYBOY and all those other money-making magazines." Now a retailer can make more from selling a dollar comic book than he can from selling TIME and NEWSWEEK, because 50% off a dollar from us is more than 40% off a dollar from them. So there's something in it for him now, there's something in it for the wholesaler. There's certainly something in it for us because our economics are better. There is something in it for the writers and artists because they have more flexibility, more latitude -- and they can make money too. Then there's our readers. They are getting more editorial pages for their dollar than if they bought three and a third 30¢ comic books. They will be getting more, better material because we're paying more for our covers, as



getting people like Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson and Curt Swan to draw them. We've designed the first dollar books to be anthology titles so that the reader doesn't feel he's tying up all his money in one character. In **WORLD'S FINEST**, for example, they'll still be Superman and Batman, but also Green Arrow, Black Canary, Wonder Woman, etc. More characters for his money. I hope this will make retailers carry comics who haven't carried them before, and hopefully change the industry.

RICHARD: DC did experiment with a version of this format a couple of years back with the **DC 100-PAGE SUPER SPECTACULAR** and didn't do too well, though admittedly they were mainly reprint.

JENETTE: I don't really believe in reprint books unless you have a very good reason for reprinting a particular story. Reprints have no justification except that you want them to pad out a comic. Now, there are some classic stories that truly deserve to see the light of day again, for example, the "Ra's Al Ghul" four part story from **BATMAN**. It's a wonderful story that we'll be reprinting complete very soon. So that's a good reprint, but reprinting for the sake of money is a terrible idea.

RICHARD: One of the first notic-

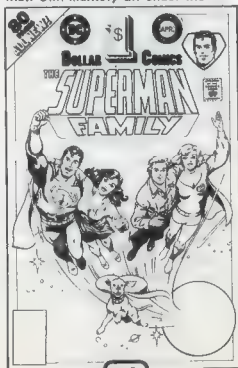
able major changes since you became publisher at DC is the establishment of the DC TV Comics line. Is this a move to try and bring the younger readers back to comics?

JENETTE: I think DC has always owned the younger market, Marvel the older market, and Gold Key the younger still. As soon as you graduate into superheroes you graduate into DC. Unfortunately we didn't have an upper area in which to move after you graduated from our younger comics -- you had too graduate into Marvel. I think there's a way to put out comics which find their own level, reach their own market, all under the

same company's roof. Basically, Marvel Comics -- which I admire, they have some wonderful writers and artists -- unfortunately they are very hard for a kid to read. A ten year old kid who picks up **THE AVENGERS** has to be a very sophisticated or totally dedicated fan to get through it because it demands tremendous mental involvement. Even at twenty-nine, I find it a bit of a strain to read **THE AVENGERS**, as much as I am thrilled by it. I picked up a copy of Cary Bates' **SUPERMAN** and it's so easy to read. Like **SUPERMAN FAMILY** it is pure entertainment. That's a very important part of comics. It doesn't mean that **THE AVENGERS** shouldn't be brilliant, it should, and **DR. STRANGE** should and **CONAN** should, but they're not going to be read by kids of ten. And, of course, there's a certain amount of parental influence in the buying of comics.

A kid is in the supermarket with his mother buying things and he decides he wants a comic. She won't buy him one that looks violent, gory and horrid, but if it says "DC TV" and she recognizes **ISIS** which her kid has been watching on Saturday morning TV, or **SHAZAM**, **WELCOME BACK KOTTER**, or **SUPER FRIENDS**, it looks all nice and familiar so she's quite happy about buying those comics.

They're written more simply also. For example, Steve Englehart is now writing **JUSTICE**



LEAGUE OF AMERICA, which has the same cast basically as SUPER FRIENDS. JLA is in the Giant 50¢ size with all-new material so Steve can write a thirty page story and really have a good time because there are a lot of characters. He can use sub-plots, characterization, continued plots, all of which appeals to the older reader. At the other end is SUPER FRIENDS. The two look different, the characters are drawn differently. One is drawn for realism, the other is more cartoony.

RICHARD: On the other hand I feel that new readers coming into DC at the moment must be very confused by the number of characters with similar powers and, in many cases, the same names. For example, there is SUPER FRIENDS which is similar to the JLA and features some of the same characters. Then there's



there's ALL STAR COMICS which, again, is another JLA but it has different characters, but with identical names. So I'm wondering if people coming into DC now, without the benefit of background knowledge of these characters, will be put off because of this.

JENETTE: True, true, true. I think it's somewhat confusing and I'm for a more united universe here at DC. Eventually I hope to have everybody in the same cosmos, all the cities existing in the same time, Clark Kent being able to talk about Batman's latest exploits in Gotham City on his news shows, etc. I don't quite know how I'm going to untangle the present situation and it might take a long time.

However, I don't think the reader is bothered that much because each comic has its own set of rules. So you pick it up and read it within the framework set by the cover, the splash page, etc. It makes sense to you.

RICHARD: So you're saying that somebody who reads SUPER FRIENDS won't necessarily read JLA, therefore SUPER FRIENDS will work for them because it is all they know.

JENETTE: I think that SUPER FRIENDS appeals to the younger audience. As they get older there may be a transitional time when they read both and then they realize JLA appeals to them more and continue on with that.

RICHARD: Marvel is presently the top-selling comic book company.

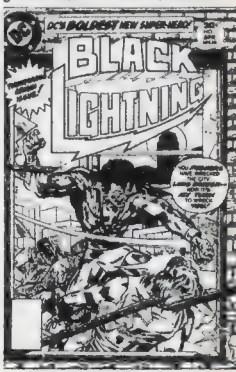


Can DC regain this position by following Marvel's successful formula or do you feel the answer lies in DC finding a whole new direction uniquely their own?

JENETTE: I think Marvel's really embody the gestalt of the sixties, a time when there was an immediate cult following for anything that was new or different. They founded a college readership that was very avid and collected HULK, SPIDER-MAN and FANTASTIC FOUR in chronological order. It became almost an underground thing in the very beginning, around 1962 -- it was considered very good to be "into Marvel Comics." But it is now 1976, going on 1977. I do not

believe in imitating someone even at the right time, but certainly to imitate something that I feel is now passe would be a terrible error on our part.

The only way to truly create something new is for an artist and writer, together as a team, or with one of them as the driving force, to come up with something that he, she or they truly believes is terrific; that they want so much to do; would kill to do. Because then that will come through somehow in the comic book. It will be a good comic that way and it will find people who want to read it. But if comics come out of something that already exists, like TV police shows, then they are going to be pale imitations. They would certainly have no long life. To me it's like buying stock and selling out at the right time. If you can get in while a TV show is hot and

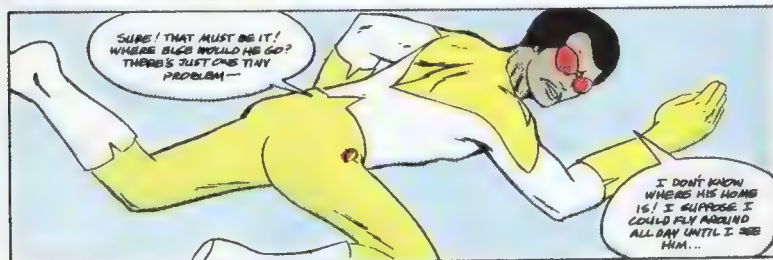


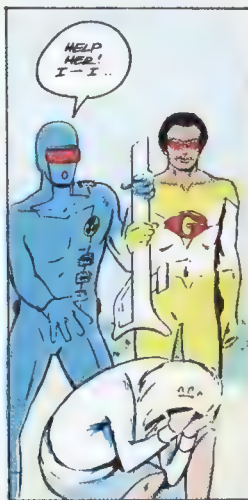
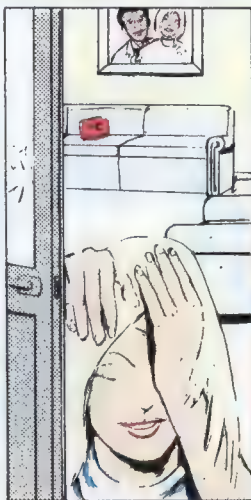
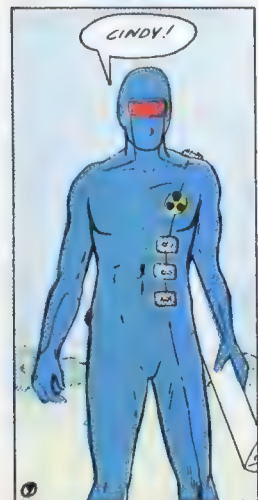
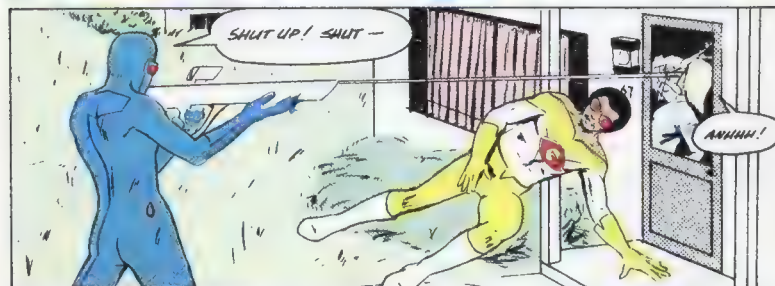
get out with a small profit before the ratings start to drop, that is great, but that's not true comics. True comics come from someone lying in bed on a hot summer's night in Ohio, thinking, "Wouldn't it be great if I could fly?"

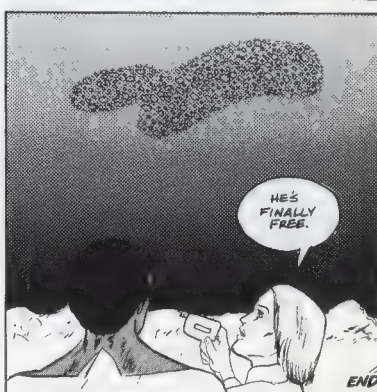
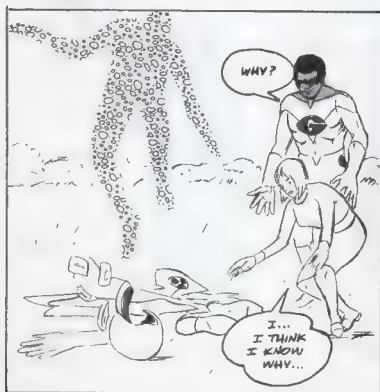
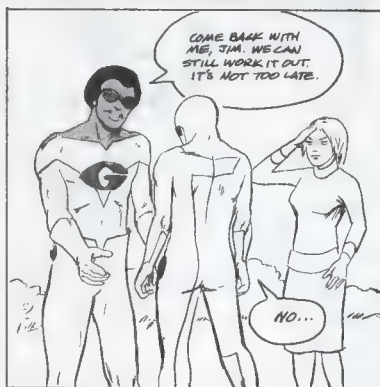
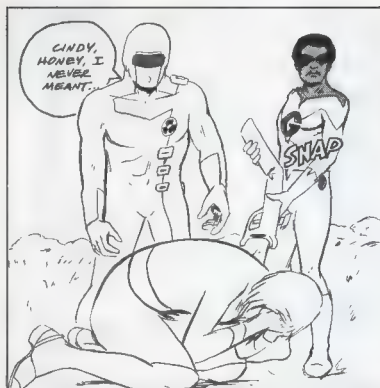
RICHARD: When you joined DC a lot was said in the fan press at the time about how you were going to improve conditions for the staff here in the DC offices. Have you achieved this?

JENETTE: There are still a lot more changes to be made with writers and artists but I've centralized DC itself. We don't have individual 'candy shops' anymore -- each editor having his own









group of books that are about three universes apart from everybody else's books. They've all started to read each other's books now to see what's going on. There's only one maniac needed at the helm and I've appointed myself to that task! Then Joe Orlando and Vinnie Colletta help further down as Managing Editor and Art Director, respectively. Everybody from Julie to Murray to Joe Kubert to Denny O'Neil to Jack Adler's production department have been all been totally co-operative in terms of trying to make DC one company.

We do 'dumb' things now, like give birthday parties for people! Every month we look at the final sales on books and the two editors that have the best selling books -- the ones with the greatest increase in sales -- get an award and we put their pictures on display with their books under their photographs. We hope that other people will see that and say, "I wonder why that book did so well?" All the covers now go up on a bulletin board because people didn't read other people's books, and to this day may not read the entire line for sure, but it is a good thing for them to go by and see how their covers compare to others. Then they think, "Hey, I'm really proud of that," or "Wow, that's a really bad cover I did." These are small changes that I truly believe in and are happening.

There are other things like giving money to writers and artists for reprinting their work -- anywhere. Not just in comics, but in books like **SECRET ORIGINS OF THE SUPER DC HEROES**. Anybody who creates a new character gets a share in the merchandising. If somebody comes along with a new concept that sounds real good then we'll pay more for the realization of that script if it seems a necessity. At that point, if we truly believe in it, we will go to press based on an emotional conviction that it's a good comic. We're giving out contracts that include group insurance and a health plan to protect freelancers -- something unique in the industry right now. People under contract to us that fulfill their workload during the course of the year get the equivalent of vacation pay. Then there's profit-sharing. For instance, this book we're doing, **SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI**. Besides the

fact that Julie Schwartz as editor gets paid extra for editing it, he will receive a bonus if it sells well. Denny O'Neil, who's writing it, and Neal Adams, who's drawing it, both get contracts in advance that will guarantee them a share of the profits. And that's true of every special project that we do.

RICHARD: Can I ask you about fandom? Did you know about it before you came to be DC's publisher or did it come as a surprise to you when you came into the job?

JENETTE: I think I knew about comics collectors paying outrageously high prices for old comics. I did know something of it because I was a comics reader and I read the letters pages; or actually I would kind of try not to read the letters pages because the letters would be, "I noticed that Wonder Woman's hair was black in issue 50 and blue-black in issue 51. Why is this?" I think this type of thing is so dopey! So I was aware that there were comics crazies who paid attention to the discrepancies and loved to find them and point them out to the editors here at DC. I knew that kind of fan. But that fans were organized and had all their own publications and lines of communication -- that I didn't know. Yet I think fandom is very important to us because it created the second generation of artists and writers that we have at the moment. They create at the center which makes you feel you're putting out comics that people love. That's nice too because the controversy is always exciting, it makes you want to do better comics.

RICHARD: You mentioned merchandising earlier on. I gather the company places a lot of importance on this.

JENETTE: We must because it's such a major source of revenue. I think we place a lot more importance on it in terms of quality control. I would love to run a company that is like Walt Disney Studios or Children's Television Workshop where nothing went out that was not conceived, polished and refined in these very offices and when it

went out into a toy store, a drug store, or whatever, we could say, that's a DC product and we're proud of it.

One of the changes I made when I came here was to make sure people knew what this company did. We were called National Periodical Publications, Inc. Now that's a very stupid name for a comic book company. When credits on a TV show read "Based on a book published by National Periodical Publications, Inc." -- that told you nothing. I said, look, we're DC Comics, let's incorporate as DC Comics, change our name. Now the credits on a TV show read, "Based on a book published by DC Comics, Inc." So people know that it's a comic that **WONDER WOMAN** is based on, not a book, a comic book that anyone can buy at a newsstand. I've made **WONDER WOMAN** monthly so that some of the fifteen million people who watch the TV show can find a copy on the newsstand as they walk past and hopefully buy it.

With **SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI** we have a really slick idea which I get a big kick out of. The cover shows Superman and Ali locked in mortal combat in the boxing ring and the audience is made up of all those famous people who would pay \$1,000 or \$2,000 for a ringside seat at a fight like that. So Jimmy Carter has given his permission, Gerald Ford has given his permission, Frank Sinatra has given his, Donny & Marie Osmond, the Jackson Five, Sonny & Cher, Joe Namath, the list goes on and on...

RICHARD: To appear in the book?

JENETTE: No, all on the cover seated at the ringside watching the fight. It's a wonderful visual concept which I hope will catch people's eye. To see Superman and Ali is an eye-stopper for starters but then they say, "Hey, look! That's... And isn't that... There's... Wow!" Adults will find people like Frank Sinatra and the kids will find Donny and Marie Osmond. I hope it'll make people who've never looked at a comic book before pick up a copy and be impressed. It'll be tabloid size so it won't be like the comics some people are ashamed to be seen buying, that they read out of a brown paper bag! Since the art is by Neal Adams and the writing is

by Denny, I trust it'll be an extraordinary good job. People will hopefully say, "I didn't realize comics were so good."

RICHARD: I must ask the question that everybody asked when they heard who would be drawing the book -- and that is: will Neal Adams complete the job on time? He has acquired a certain reputation in recent years for being late with jobs.

JENETTE: He must finish it. I'm dedicated to the book coming out as is everybody else here. Dick Giordano is inking it, which is a help because he can move Neal along at the studio by working closely with him. Neal and Dick both realize that if the book isn't on time we all will be losing money.

RICHARD: I'm curious about these people that will be featured on the cover. Did you actually go to them and ask permission?

JENETTE: We had to, yes.

RICHARD: What sort of reaction did you get?

JENETTE: Everyone was so terrific, we got almost no refusals. Sammy Davis Jr. said no. He said that he would do it for almost anybody else in the world but he was having a personal feud with Ali, and I think Howard Cosell was too. All that have agreed think it's a terrific ink. We'll also be having a free poster in each copy which we hope wholesalers and retailers will display. It'll be impressive enough to make people want to buy the book.

RICHARD: To round off, can you see 1977 as the year DC 'returns to glory'?

JENETTE: Oh, I think we're well on our way now. It's very exciting because there is a tremendous interest in the industry about what's going on here. We have many people from Marvel calling up wanting to come over here -- quite contrary to the past when many people left here to go to Marvel. Fortunately, at this moment Stan Lee and I are friends but he's beginning to think we are pirating his people away and he's not very happy about it. This is not true. Actually the people are

appearing on our doorstep for personal reasons of their own and because there are contracts, reprint royalties and merchandising money available here.

RICHARD: Does Marvel have this merchandising idea? I know they return artwork and give reprint royalties...

JENETTE: They don't give reprint royalties. It was a radical move by us. They do so much reprint work that it would be hard for them to give reprint money -- it's hard for us. It costs us a tremendous amount of money, but we think it's the right thing to do. So they have not moved into this yet, but I'd like them to. I'd like the industry itself to get better so that people don't use comics as a stepping stone to something else. I'd like people to think that comics are a most creative field where you can do everything. Really pioneer all kinds of new territory rather than say, "well it's underpaid and it's feudal, it's a certain kind of serfdom but it'll serve as an apprenticeship while I'm writing my screenplay or great American novel, or finding my way into commercial art." Comics themselves should be an end in themselves which one seeks out, not something you pass through. I'm trying to make that possible.

Interview

[One of the most controversial columns in TCR over the past couple of years has been the MEDIA NEWS entry, written by the iconoclastic Rona Blabbit. That many people have assumed, because of her pseudonymic existence in these pages, that she doesn't exist except as someone's penname, hasn't kept Rona from continually coming up with something to stir up controversy. She previously has kept nearly everything about her top secret -- for reasons she did not care to divulge -- but she did allow us a little time in June to ask her a few impertinent pertinent questions. She was unusually cooperative.]

TCR: How did you get your start in comics fandom? Did you read comic books as a girl?

RB: Yeah, we used to collect the Dells -- LOONEY TUNES, LITTLE

LULU, WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES -- in a sort of a club. This boy who lived next door and I would pool our money and get an issue or two a month -- then read the same one over and over. It must've been pretty good stuff.

TCR: Don't you still have them?

RB: No, he moved away and took them all with him. He used to draw crayon covers for the issues that had lost the original, and I guess he felt that that entitled him to them. I haven't been to any conventions or anything, so I haven't seen them since.

TCR: Do you remember anything about them?

RB: Well, my favorite -- and I don't even remember if it was in WDC&S or UNCLE SCROOGE -- had Donald and the boys hauling yak butter from the North Pole for Uncle Scrooge. Of course, when they came south, it all melted. Another of my favorites was a GYRO GEAR-LOOSE where he invented a giant coffee pot that paved roads and even painted the center stripe down the middle. I can still see that coffee pot chugging into the distance...

TCR: Haven't you thought of collecting that stuff that you once had? Do you collect Disneys?

RB: Too expensive for me. I have a limited budget, and the most I can afford to indulge in are the current titles I buy.

TCR: Which are --?

RB: Oh, THE AVENGERS, NOVA, SUPERMAN, BATMAN, FLASH, JLA -- generally the escapist, super-hero stuff. Horror turns me off, as does overwriting. I also can't stand romance comics -- they seem to all be written down to girls, as if all we have in our heads is the desire to snare a man at any cost. Really revolting.

TCR: Would you term yourself a heavy reader?

RB: Not really... I watch too much television for that. Really, I read the daily paper, TIME, NEWSWEEK, TV GUIDE, BILLBOARD, ROLLING STONE, VARIETY on occasion, even PLAYBOY. That's about it. No fiction of any kind.

TCR: No interest?

RB: No, I don't think that's it. It has something to do with my attention span, I suppose. Two hours at a book is tops, unless it's a biography -- that's strange, isn't it? Since I don't have Evelyn Wood skills, it takes too long to enjoy a good book. I used to read a lot of science fiction.

TCR: Nothing more -- romantic?

RB: Really, Mike -- how chauvinist. I cringe at the same kind of romantic dreck you probably do -- LOVE STORY, THE WALTONS -- although I do have a soft spot for LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE...

TCR: Speaking of which, let's get to television. Your column seems overly devoted to TV, as opposed to say, films or other media. This is obviously because you spend more time watching TV than anything else, eh?

RB: I must really sound boring. I do have a real job, you know. My return on the column doesn't support me. But you're right. I genuinely LIKE television, which is probably a bit strange for a critic these days. TV isn't supposed to be any good unless it's PBS or something, but I believe something like M*A*S*H, a beautifully cast and well-done weekly show is immeasurably more worthwhile to me, now, than any film Stanley Kubrick spent three years making. Not that I don't appreciate the latter, but I'm a real fan of actors, and fantasy, and all the stuff that you can get a lot of on TV. That's not to say I don't detest a lot of what's on. I just like a lot, that's all.

TCR: We'd probably be remiss if we didn't ask specifics.

RB: Well, I've said this before, but you asked. My favorites (in order): M*A*S*H, MARY TYLER MOORE, BOB NEUHART, TONY RANDALL, LAVERNE & SHIRLEY, QUINCY, HAPPY DAYS, CAROL BURNETT, LANIGAN'S RABBI, McMillan, COLUMBO. I have a lot of least favorites, among which number KOJAK, HAWAII FIVE-O, ALICE, SANFORD AND SON, CHICO & THE MAN and a lot of shows I've seen too little of to rate. Anticipating another question, I try to avoid recent theatrical films that have been cut for television. It's not the

commercials -- it's the fact that they're cutting stuff that frequently destroys understanding of the plot. I love movies from the thirties and forties, especially with good actors -- those I'll watch all the time. Y'know, people like David Niven, Cary Grant, William Powell -- and Ginger Rogers.

TCR: You mentioned cuts for TV. You do have views on violence and sex on TV?

RB: First of all, I detest seeing them grouped together. Violence on TV, I feel, unless portrayed in an obviously unrealistic setting, should be kept to a minimum. By this I do NOT mean that BARETTA shouldn't be as violent as Robert Blake wants -- it's more like they should only have three or four cop shows on each network. I don't need cop shows at all, but some people want them, and they should have them.

Sex, on the other hand, is a rarity on TV except in a sort of snickering, hand-over-mouth type of thing. I don't object to nudity on TV, and I wouldn't mind seeing that supplant violence as the IN thing to object to on TV. At least nobody ever got killed looking at a naked body. Nobody ever got killed looking at violence either -- but you get my point.

TCR: Let's get back to comics. What do you see in the future for women in comics?

RB: You mean creatively, or as characters? Creatively, I'd love to see a lot more women get involved. Certainly, at my college, there were as many talented women in the drawing classes as men -- they're just not directed into drawing comics. One of the problems is the fact that the comics subject matter -- that sort of macho punch-the-crap out of everybody stuff, or worse, the morbid horror things -- isn't appealing to many women, including me. If comics had more of a spread in subject matter, as they used to, it's probable that more women would get into it. Say there were more sitcom or soap opera type stuff -- that might help.

As for characters, ISIS just failed, didn't it? Of course, that comic was just a bad book, but it probably won't suggest to the publishers -- "Hey, let's do more wo-

men!" Unfortunately, at the moment, except for WONDER WOMAN -- is that in the past or the present now? -- none of the heroine books have them doing much. RED SONJA is okay, but that's a barbarian book, she's a killer, no matter which way you slice it (ouch!). I haven't read much of MS. MARVEL, but she seems sort of, uh, vacant -- a junior league CAPTAIN MARVEL. That's always a problem: the heroines are either in somebody's shadow, like BATGIRL, or the women friends are portrayed as either silly fools or conniving bitches. Lois Lane hasn't improved much and even Iris Allen has to act stupid every so often. An alien who read only comics would get a pretty awful image of women.

TCR: Ever think of becoming a comics writer?

RB: That's the same problem you have -- you have to live there, have the ability to weather New York as well as the ability to write -- because so much depends upon knowing what the editor wants. You can't do it from Wisconsin.

TCR: But do you want to?

RB: I wouldn't risk my job on getting a job in the comics industry. I don't have the deep need to do it, either. Do you?

TCR: I suppose I do, though I haven't quit my job to try either. One last thing to wrap this up: Our readers, whether they want us to lose your column permanently or want you to take over the magazine, want to know -- why Rona Blabbit? Why a pseudonym?

RB: You know I -- well, initially, it was because so many people had contributed to it, even though I had rewritten it, I didn't want to put my name on it and Rona Blabbit seemed a fine compromise. As I wrote more and more of it, I just kept it. Now it's my mystique, you know? Who is Rona Blabbit? What terrible secret is she trying to reveal? What famous person isn't she? I love it.

TCR: Well, that certainly didn't answer that question.

RB: No, but it certainly wasn't very informative either.

TCR: Say goodnight, Gracie.



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Protect your comics and magazines with heavy-duty 3-MIL protective polyethylene bags. Samples available if you send a large self-addressed envelope with 3 ounces (currently 35¢) of postage on it (Canadians send 35¢ in coin). These prices were effective October 1, 1975 and are guaranteed through December 31, 1977.

Comic sale list available for 25¢ in coin.

OHIO RESIDENTS PLEASE ADD 5 1/2% OHIO SALES TAX

REGULAR BAGS

(7 1/8" X 10 1/2" with 2" flap)

	U.S.	CANADA		U.S.	CANADA
100 for	\$ 3.25	\$ 4.00	5,000 for	\$116.00	\$141.00
300 for	8.80	10.25	6,000 for	138.60	168.60
500 for	13.50	15.75	7,000 for	161.00	196.00
1,000 for	24.25	29.25	8,000 for	183.20	223.20
2,000 for	47.00	57.00	9,000 for	205.20	250.20
3,000 for	70.20	85.20	10,000 for	227.00	277.00
4,000 for	93.20	113.20	15,000 for	337.50	412.50

GOLDEN AGE BAGS

(7 7/8" X 10 1/2" with 2" flap)

	U.S.	CANADA		U.S.	CANADA
100 for	\$ 3.85	\$ 4.70	2,000 for	\$ 50.50	\$ 61.50
300 for	10.50	12.25	3,000 for	75.45	91.95
500 for	15.00	17.50	4,000 for	100.20	122.20
1,000 for	25.75	31.25	5,000 for	124.75	152.25

MONSTER MAGAZINE BAGS

(8 3/4" X 11 1/4" with 1 1/2" flap)

	U.S.	CANADA		U.S.	CANADA
100 for	\$ 4.30	\$ 5.30	2,000 for	\$ 57.50	\$ 70.50
300 for	12.00	14.00	3,000 for	86.00	105.50
500 for	17.50	21.00	4,000 for	114.00	140.00
1,000 for	29.25	35.75	5,000 for	141.50	174.00

TREASURY BAGS

(10 1/2" X 13 5/4" with 2" flap)

	U.S.	CANADA		U.S.	CANADA
50 for	\$ 4.00	\$ 5.50	1,000 for	\$ 49.50	\$ 60.50
100 for	6.50	9.00	2,000 for	98.00	120.00
300 for	16.00	21.00	3,000 for	146.00	182.00
500 for	27.50	34.50	4,000 for	195.00	253.00

OHIO RESIDENTS PLEASE ADD 5 1/2% OHIO SALES TAX

Canadian prices are higher due to much higher postage charges.

GOLDEN MAN



First Class
Mail

